

Short story: The Demon King Thinks Back on a Thrifty Life.

It was evening at the number hundred road which had many shops. Due to the guests who were shopping, salary men who just got off from work and students returning from home going past Sasazuka station, the entire place became very lively.

While nimbly avoiding the flow of the crowd and carefully choosing dinner ingredients, Suzuno spotted someone in the crowd. Even someone as petite as Suzuno was able to spot a lanky figure who was a head taller than everyone else.

Although she did not have a relationship with him that was good enough to warrant a close exchange of greetings while coincidentally meeting on the street, but since they were neighbours living in the same apartment, it is still better to say hi. Not to mention, the other party is very sensitive to the smell of a good bargain.

"It's just a normal polite greeting."

While staring at the back of the head of the resident from Sasazuka Villa Rosa room 201, Ashiya Shiro, and slowly approaching him, Suzuno noticed something.

"Hm? I remember that that shop's tenant seems to have moved out.....what is he doing?"

Ashiya was standing in front of the closed store which already had its shutters down and was in a daze.

Though he was standing at the side of the road and not obstructing anyone's passage, but the usual Ashiya would never stand at the side of the road and blank out.

"Hey, Ashiya-dono, is there something wrong?"

Suzuno approached Ashiya and asked him about the situation.

In Ashiya's hands were two shopping bags, one was the reusable bag that he frequently uses while the other was an unusually large paper bag which seemed to contain something very heavy.

"Hey, Shiro-dono, Shiro.....Alsiel!"

She called him again but he did not notice and did not even turn around.

Usually, Suzuno would only address him with the name he used in Japan, but thinking that he might not have heard her, she took the chance to use Ashiya's real name when it was more noisy.

".....Ahh, Crestia Bell."

Ashiya finally turned around. But there was something very strange.

His eyes looked very lax and he actually used Suzuno's actual name to address her. The usual careful Ashiya would never commit such a mistake.

"What, what happened? Are you feeling unwell?"

Suzuno forgot the position that she was in and as a neighbour who frequently encountered him and noticed his weird behavior, she was simply expressing her worry.

"This....."

Ashiya said in a trembling voice and lifted up the heavy paper bag in his right hand for Suzuno to see.

"Ah? What's that, what's inside...."

Suzuno opened the paper bag and looked inside.

And inside, it actually contained....

"I won."

"Ha?"

Ashiya blankly made a sound, Suzuno lifted her head before she could understand what was written on the paper box in the bag.

"This kind of thing was supposed to be impossible....it's just a fool's fantasy...."

Among the Japanese, no, among all the humans on Earth, the one who dabbled the most in science fiction, Ashiya, slowly lifted his gaze and looked in a certain direction.

Suzuno followed the line of vision and also looked, over there was a large white tent and the words which read number hundred road merchant street lucky draw.

"....Hey Alsiel, don't tell me the reason you were dazing around here was because...."

Suzuno suddenly felt very idiotic at that moment for worrying about Alsiel.

Suzuno looked at the bag's contents once more.

It was a sturdy cardboard box with the words "d.eR Pressure cooker 4L".

Suzuno sighed deeply.

The ones who thought something extraordinary had happened and gathered at Sasazuka Villa Rosa room 201 looked at Ashiya who acted as though he had struck gold suddenly felt a wave of pity. (T/N: I'm sorry, it is so hard to translate this part but I assume the sentence means that Ashiya is very happy)

The great demon general Alsiel who conquered an entire continent in the alternate world, Ente Isla, was actually over the moon from winning a pressure cooker in a lucky draw.

Even the Hero Emilia, that is Yusa Emi, who had come to challenge them in Japan also felt much empathy towards him.

"Demon King, Lucifer, don't you two feel ashamed? Letting Ashiya become like this."

"Ah, no, that...."

In front of Emi's strict and serious expression, the Demon King Satan, that is Maou Sadao stammered and could not say anything.

"Just because a pressure cooker enters his hands, he loses himself completely. Why don't you compliment Ashiya who's been having a hard time supporting both your lives?"

"Eh--....."

The demon general Lucifer, that is Urushihara Hanzo, thought it was troublesome and made a sound when Suzuno chided him.

"Ashiya-san....really seems very happy."

“Cooker, very happy?”

“Yeah, that pressure cooker, if you bought it, it would quite costly.”

The only human on earth who knows about Maou and Emi’s real identities, Sasaki Chiho, tells the Demon King and Hero’s “daughter” Alas=Ramus why Ashiya was so happy.

Unable to bear Emi and Suzuno’s uncomfortable gaze, Maou squeezed a smile out and said to Ashiya.

“Tha, that, that thing, ah sorry, thanks for your hard work.”

“What are you saying, my lord! You do not have to mention what happened in the past today!!”

One cannot be sure if Ashiya really understood Maou’s attempts to console him. He moved the spanking new shiny pressure cooker into the sink and started rinsing it with tap water.

Seems like he plans to use it tonight.

“Although I don’t know how hard his life might have been, but it’s ridiculous that one pressure cooker can make up for a Demon General’s painstaking effort!”

Looking at Ashiya’s back, Emi could not help but take a jab at the situation.

For those who understand what Ashiya’s daily life was like, they would realize what a large impact a single pressure cooker can bring to his housekeeper lifestyle.

However, for those who know about Ashiya’s real identity, whether a single pressure cooker can make up significantly or insignificantly for what he has done before, there is really no way to tell.

“You said this pressure cooker was expensive, but what’s the price actually?”

Similar to Emi, Urushihara who looked at Ashiya’s back and felt that the whole situation was very strange, took the packaging that was left behind and started looking at it.

Maou also looked in the same direction. Then, Chiho nonchalantly answered.

“Even if it’s a low end model, it would cost at least 10, 000 yen.” (T/N: Roughly \$90 USD.That’s....not very expensive I feel.)

““10, 000 yen!?””

Instantly, the paper box fell from Urushihara’s hands.

“One, one pot costs 10, 000 yen!? WHY!?”

“That expensive!? This thing!?”

Emi said while she took the paper box from beside the shocked Demon King and Demon General.

“Actually 10, 000 yen is pretty cheap. If it has the words 4L, I think it might cost around 20, 000 yen.” (T/N Roughly \$180 USD. Oookkk so maybe this is a bit pricy.)

“20, 000!?”

Maou screamed again and quickly stood up straight.

“if, if it’s that valuable, we might as well sell it.”

“No!!”

Ashiya was listening very well to what the others were saying and was very sensitive to what Maou said on a whim.

“Kitchen appliances are not worth much even if they have not been used before. I am not letting it go.”

“I know! I was just making a comment that’s all....”

Facing a furious Ashiya, Maou hastily retracted his comment.

“I wanted to make Chashu for a while now! And this pot is so large; soups, braised vegetables should be a piece of cake....Ah! My dreams have expanded!”

To Ashiya whose dreams are gushing out from the pressure cooker--

“How about you just expand your large pot dreams and give up and conquering the world.”

“Ashiya-san, is shining!”

“You’ve been suffering quite a bit....Alsiel.”

Emi, Chiho and Suzuno’s words continuously expressed pity and other feelings.

“Oi, Urushihara, do not touch that pot. If you wreck it in any way, we’ll be killed.”

“Why the hell would I touch that pot. Today’s Ashiya is very horrifying.”

While on the other end, Maou and Urushihara felt that Ashiya who has a pressure cooker in his hands is a bit terrifying.

“But Ashiya-san is really amazing. You know how to make use of it to cook when you only just got it.”

“Ma, I have a lot of things I wanted to try after researching some culinary books. But a 20, 000 yen pot...”

“For a flat pot, the supermarket only sells it for 700 yen, right?” (T/N: Approximately USD\$6.)

“Yeah. A kitchen knife costs about 1500 yen. (T/N: Approx USD\$13.) If you over sharpen the knife, it would become thin. But talking about pressure cookers, it really something that you desire but do not dare to get.”

Ashiya, who had just finished washing the pressure cooker, wiped it down with a towel.

“There is also the issue of where to put it. When I bought an oil filter, I gave up thinking of getting additional cooking utensils. But today is really a good day. I really want to send this pot to my past self.”

(T/N: Oil filter is the device that some Japanese households get to allow them to reuse cooking oil. Environmentally friendly.)

All of Ashiya’s words revealed how much he liked the pressure cooker.

“When I just arrived in Japan, because of the restrictions of cooking utensils, I cannot even make economical cooking.” (T/N:The term used in the novel was setsuyaku (節約) which refers to being economical. This sort of cooking seems to be a Japanese phenomenon only?)

“You can’t make economical cooking? What’s that?”

Suzuno tilted her head thinking that it was strange. Emi looked at her and answered.

“Economical cooking, is when you take the sprouts or something similar from vegetables you ate, gather up the remaining and let it grow then eat it. I found that it was quite interesting and wanted to try it. Alas=Ramus likes onion tea quite a bit.

“Onion tea?”

Onion and tea, Emi just joined two nouns that usually have no connection with each other together, Maou frowned at the thought of this. But, the person who took the responsibility of explaining was no doubt or should one say was obviously Ashiya.

“You cooked the tea using the brown skin of the onion right?”

“As expected, you know.”

“Is it alright, letting a small kid drinking something like that?”

“Ah en. Papa it’s wacha wacha.” (T/N: I don’t know what she means either)

Maou started stroking Alas=Ramus’s hair and she started to laugh at how ticklish it felt.

“I won’t let her drink too much.”

“Ma, vegetable shoots or onion tea or anything similar is considered easy. The kind of economical cooking I’m talking about cannot be prepared if the cooking environment is not right. If I had to give an example....deep fried Edamame pods is a classic example.”

“Fried Edamame pods can be eaten?”

Chiho was surprised at Ashiya’s example.

“Don’t you have any questions to ask about demons eating fried Edamame!?”

While Emi was surprised about other matters.

“Usually, they cannot be eaten like that. It’s just that when introducing how to use leftovers to cook, this dish tends to be mentioned.”

Ashiya said while skillfully peeling the skin of the onion he just picked up.

“To make fried edamame pods, you need to remove the stem and the seam from the pod and split it into two. Then dust it with some flour before putting into the pot for frying. But...”

Ashiya was dicing potatoes and red carrots into large chunks.

“But to use flour and large amounts of oil, for us, this isn’t economical cooking anymore.”

When they just drifted to Japan, to the penniless Maou and Ashiya, the ingredients for economical cooking is cheap but they had no way to have a decent set of seasoning and have no money to buy cooking utensils.

To make deep fried foods, a large amount of cooking oil is needed. Also oil that has been cooked before turns rancid very easily when wheat flour is present inside so it becomes very wasteful if not stored properly.

For the Demon fortress, it is unacceptable to pour away cooking oil that has only been used once. If one needs to create deep fried food, then they need an environment which allows them to reuse the cooking oil.

As such, not only do they have to prepare a heat resistant oil filter and the kitchen towels for filtering, they also have

to plan what to cook in order to make use of the oil which gets filtered.

To eat something like Edamame pods which are supposed to be thrown away looks like something economical on the surface.

But in order to prepare a good working environment, it was beyond the ability of the demons who were struggling to make ends meet.

“Also, the pots for deep-frying have to be different from those used for boiling or braising other dishes, or the life span of the pots will shorten. As for washing, large amounts of dish-washing liquid are required. Then again, it’s foolish to buy various seasonings just for the sake of making economical cooking. What is true home cooking is making the best use of the leftover ingredients in the fridge, recipes that do not make use of large amount of money in the long term.....”

“I know already! I know already! I was wrong!”

Actually Emi did not do anything wrong, but in front of Ashiya and his endless philosophy about economical cooking, she could not bear it and just apologized.

“What, and I was just going to tell what kind of economical dishes you can make with just a flat pot and a kitchen knife.”

“There is no need, thank you very much. Look, Alas=Ramus is very delighted to see that you want to make new dishes, please do prepare something.”

“Hm, alright. Please wait for a while. I need to be serious for this first challenge. Clear soup...I should just use a little for a start.”

Ashiya who detected Alas=Ramus’s gaze, nodded and started to focus on cooking.

“Ma.....”

Seeing Ashiya’s burning passion, Maou could not help but laugh smile bitterly.

“That time we really worked really hard just to survive. Ashiya started to focus on cooking around the time I started working for MgRonalds.”

When Maou and Ashiya were defeated by Emi and fled to Japan, they truly had nothing.

If not for the kind aid of Sasazuka Villa Rosa’s landlady Shiba Miki, they probably would have starved to death in the streets.

“That time, we frequently dumpster dived for cabbage and broccoli cores to eat. And what else, oh yeah, bean sprouts!” (T/N: Oi, are you really the demon king.)

Cabbage and broccoli cores can be sliced to thin slices after the hard skin is removed. It is the multipurpose ingredient for stir fried or braised dishes.

Bean sprouts can be bought from the supermarket for 10 yen, they come in large amounts and are packed with nutrition.

Of course, Emi also ate a lot of reused food such as the bread ears* and the bean curd curdles and so on, she usually bought those at very low prices for her meals.

(T/N: Bread ears or pan-no-mimi is a Japanese term. It’s the sides of the bread that are sliced off to make sandwiches, it also refers to the edges of cakes that get sliced off. Taken from a blog of a japan exchange student)

Thanks to all this hard work, they did not go hungry much.

“.....I don't want to lead this kind of life.”

To Urushihara who said such a thing, Maou lightly kicked him from behind.

“Be thankful rice bucket. Aren't you able to lead this kind of easy life thanks to Ashiya's resourcefulness?”

(T/N: Rice bucket (飯桶) is a term which refers to a person who doesn't do work and only eats.)

Maou criticized Urushihara who only knew of the current life of the Demon Fortress.

“.....Ashiya-san, do you need me to help you in any way?”

Just then, Chiho who had just been observing the bickering and chatting between the demons started to say.

Ashiya turned his head and said while smiling.

“Can you? Then, may I trouble you to take two potato skins (T/N: not peeled potato skins, something like a skin like ingredient that is made from potatoes) from the bottom of the fridge and boil them? You can use that pot over there.”

Ashiya directed his gaze at the pot's position.

“....I'll slice some pickles and bring them over. Even though it is something from the supermarket, but lately I've been rather fond of the delicious branded pickles.”

Suzuno also stood up and went to her own apartment and gave a heads up that she was going to add some dishes to the Demon fortress's dining table.

“Wha, what is it, Alas=Ramus?”

Looking at what the rest are doing, Alas=Ramus raised her head and stared at Emi intently.

“Then how about Mama?”

“Eh?”

“You're not helping?”

“Uu.....”

Emi was silenced by her daughter's innocent eyes.

Seeing Chiho and Suzuno starting to help out, she started thinking shouldn't Mama be doing something too.

But unfortunately, Emi did not prepare to add anything to the dinner table at all.

“....well well well.”

“No? Nothing?”

Seeing Emi becoming flustered due to Alas=Ramus innocent stare, Maou felt that it was very interesting. Maou's expression of course made Emi even more frustrated but she swallowed her anger and said.

“....Next time, I'll bring something over.”

Rather than saying that she was saying this to Alas=Ramus, it was more of an announcement to the rest of the people present.

“Ma, don’t push it. After all, you come over here straight from work.”

It was after work when Emi frequently comes to this Demon fortress table and had dinner with a mix of humans and demons. Not sure when this habit started though.

Even if she prepared something at home, whether she brought it to work first before bringing it to the Demon Fortress at night or returning home after work to pick up the dish, it wouldn’t be practical at all..

“Ne, Alas=Ramus, Mama, is unexpectedly hardworking.”

“Unexpectedly! What do you mean unexpectedly?!”

Maou carried Alas=Ramus while trying to explain for Emi.

“Alas=Ramus, why don't you say something to Lucifer. Ask him to help or something.”

“Don’t throw the embers at me.”

Alas=Ramus widened her eyes and looked at Lucifer who obviously had a “this-is-troublesome” expression on his face and shook her small head.

She lifted her troubled face and said to Maou.

“Papa, Lucifer won’t help right?”

“”” ...Eu””””

“What!”

Not just Maou and Emi, even Ashiya and Chiho who were listening to their conversation held their breath, and Urushihara who was the subject of this conversation turned to Alas=Ramus sharply.

Following that--

“What is it, what happened?”

When Suzuno returned carrying a small bowl full of pickles, everyone, with the exception of Urushihara, doubled over in laughter.

Urushihara’s face was red and the other four were laughing uncontrollably while Alas=Ramus was stunned.

Although she wasn’t sure what exactly happened, Suzuno knew she just missed something interesting.

“Hey, hey, Lucifer, what are you now? Alas=Ramus actually said that about you. Kukuku.”

“Hm?”

“~~~~~!!”

Urushihara ,who steadily blushing more furiously from Emi’s words, glared at Suzuno who just walked in and said.

“Don’t start asking about unnecessary things!!”

Urushihara urged.

“.....alright, I'll wash the bowls. Anything other than that pressure cooker....”

He said in a really small voice.

“.....looks like I really missed something interesting. Can you tell me in more detail?”

Suzuno was brimming with interest when she saw Urushihara proactively helping out.

“I already said not to ask about unnecessary things!!”

If someone said one more word, Urushihara would probably start biting people.

“A child's eyes are really amazing.”

“Yeah.”

Maou and Emi were amazed at Alas=Ramus's intelligent observation.

“Ashiya-san, the skins are done. Ah haha....”

Chiho smiled as she finished her job of boiling the skins. When she thought about what happened, she subconsciously started laughing again.

“Thank you, Sasaki-san. Oh right, Urushihara, forget about the bowls. Press the button on the rice cooker. You can do that at least.”

“Don't treat me like a moron! I'm going to be angry!!”

Listening to Ashiya's orders, Urushihara tensed his shoulders, feeling irritated, and honestly went to press the switch for the rice cooker.

As the rice cooker made a noise, it started cooking the rice prepared for the room's humans and demons.

When the warm fragrance from the pressure cooker and rice cooker started to fill the room, the noisy dinner table was cleaned up after a while, and so came the end of the day for the usual Sasazuka.

END